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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager Update
DT: July 2, 2015

Dear Board:

Please see the following update for your meeting on July 7.

Town Hall Flagpole Replacement: The new flag pole is installed and flying the colors in advance of Independence Day!



And, the wonderfully restored bronze memorial plaque – courtesy of L.S. Starret Co. – is also re-installed and a new brick walkway, thanks to the talents of Athol’s DPW and Al Keddy in particular, add to a distinguished final product.

A short ceremony to thank the many donors to the project is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14 at 11:00 a.m. after which light refreshments will be served.

The Board’s office will release a full list of the donors – along with a photo timeline for the project – prior to the recognition event.



MART and CTS Concerns: Senior staff from the Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART) and management staff from the Athol operation met with a local contingent including COA Director Cathy Savoy, Heywood Healthcare’s Rebecca Bialecki, Selectman Stephen Raymond, Selectman Mitch Grosky and I at Town Hall on June 18 to discuss concerns over the purported diminishing level of service.

The meeting was productive in that clear and concise communication occurred about issues surrounding peak hours of transport (generally in the afternoons) and that the funding for the service appears to be headed for a cut of \$370,000 by the state legislature.

It was acknowledged that changes in pricing were not well-communicated in advance and that there was a need for general improvement in sharing policy changes with local stakeholders.

Of immediate major concern is the need for additional funding which, if not addressed in a supplemental budget, will mean a workforce reduction and thus reduced routes.

The Board of Selectmen, Town Manager and citizens should make their concerns known to their state representative and senator. Beyond the immediate need, we must continue to advocate that sufficient funding be targeted to MART specifically for the Athol-Orange transit services rather than relying upon a yearly hoped-for earmark request.

The above reflects my opinion of the meeting and I would welcome Selectmen Raymond's and Grosky's thoughts as well be shared with the Board.

Renegotiated Police/Fire Disability Insurance Premium: Heather Brissette and I have been working with our MIIA representative through the spring in hopes of reducing the premium on our police and fire disability policy. Through review of a competing proposal, and adjusting our deductible, the Town will receive a savings of \$15,000 to potentially \$40,000 (if no claims) on this policy without compromising the benefit level to our employees or the statutorily required MacNamara death benefit coverage.

Special Legislation re: Group Health Insurance: All documentation including certified Town Meeting votes was provided to state Sen. Anne Gobi and state Rep. Susannah Whipps Lee for filing. Both legislators have acknowledged the request and agreed to work together to pursue passage. I will keep the Board apprised as this moves through the process.

Town and Library Solar (standing update until complete): As we seek to close each of these projects out I plan to keep an update on my report so that the Board is apprised of progress.

National Grid has moved quickly on its side of the project since the solar field was completed. I am now informed by NextEra that the witness test with the utility is scheduled for July 6 and that "Permission to Operate" is anticipated one to three business days thereafter. The key date for us – the Commercial Operation Date – is projected prior to the end of July.

The Library project continues in stasis. NextEra has brought in a master electrician who is working to develop a satisfactory plan for inter-connection. The electrician found some deficiencies and continues to work with the Wiring Inspector to resolve outstanding concerns.

Miscellaneous Items: Other items include:

- Met with area town officials, regional planning agency staff and MassDOT regional staff to discuss status of Route 2 Task Force projects and to advocate additional concerns along Athol stretch.
- Met with officials of ARRS to discuss joint procurement progress relative to electric supply.
- Opened bids for 40 Maple Street parcel (high bidder withdrew and forfeited \$1,000 deposit; second bid of \$5,000 under review for sufficiency of value).
- Met with Building Inspector and Board of Health Agent regarding status of 60 Canal Street cleanup; met on site with property owner and BOH Agent to view property and discuss future plans.
- Finalized MOU relative to Summer Food Program with town of Orange.
- Convened meeting of planning, public works, accounting, EDIC and Town Manager to review status of work, budgets, grants and needed financing to close-out the North Quabbin Commons water system improvements.
- Held Department Head meeting and first "Safety and Development Team" meeting to improve cross-communication amongst departments involved in new development and permitting.